

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY ASKS CUSTOMERS TO HELP REPORT POWER OUTAGES DURING UPCOMING STORM

Customers Can Call 1-800-PGE-5002 to Report Power Outages, Get Updates

SAN FRANCISCO-Meteorologists are forecasting a powerful round of storms to hit much of Northern California starting today. Weather experts say rain will be heavy at times and snow is likely in the higher mountain elevations. Winds, gusting up to 50 miles per hour and higher, are expected in many parts of the state.

During these fierce storms, it is likely that power outages will occur. Should the power go out, customers can get the latest information on service restoration times by calling a special power outage phone number at 1-800-PGE-5002. This automated phone system is the quickest way for customers to receive the most current information about outages in their neighborhood.

The automated Outage Hotline is also the method customers should use to report an outage affecting their home or business. Like all utilities, Pacific Gas and Electric Company relies on its customers to help it identify power outages, so crews can be dispatched to assess and repair the damage. Without customer reporting, there is no efficient way to pinpoint outages throughout the company's vast 70,000 square mile service area. For this reason, PG&E asks its customers to call the Outage Hotline to report an outage affecting them.

Once the outage is reported, Pacific Gas and Electric Company's crew are prepared to provide responsive service and timely information to the 14 million Californians to whom it delivers gas and electricity each day. When winter storms knock out power to homes and businesses, Pacific Gas and Electric Company crews work quickly to restore power as safely as possible.

As part of its regular maintenance program and to provide safe and reliable service the utility patrols every mile of every line every year- all 110,000 miles of its electric distribution system. During 2002, the company expects to spend approximately \$140 million on its vegetation management program, trimming trees and removing the worst ones entirely, to help prevent tree branches from coming into contact with power lines and causing outages. The utility's tree trimming efforts include pruning trees in such a manner as to account for typical storm-related wind sway.

Last month's powerful storms reminded everyone of the importance of preparing for winter. Pacific Gas and Electric Company offers some tips to keep its customers safe if the power does go out:

- * Treat all downed power lines as if they are "live" or energized. Keep yourself and others away from them and immediately notify PG&E at 1-800-743-5000 or call 911.
- * Have battery-operated radios and flashlights with fresh batteries ready for updates on storm conditions and power outages.

* PG&E recommends that customers do not use candles because of the risk of fire. If you must use candles, extreme caution is urged. Do not use candles near drapes, under lampshades or near any flammable objects. Keep candles away from small children, and do not leave candles unattended.

* Empty, clean plastic milk jugs or 2-liter soda bottles can be used to make ice. Fill them to about two inches from the top and store them in your freezer. If the power goes out, you can move them to your refrigerator to keep food cool. With minimal opening and shutting of doors, food can remain usable for up to six hours. For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>

* If you have a stand-by electric generator, inform PG&E and make sure that it's installed safely. If it's not, you risk damaging your property and endangering PG&E line workers who may be working on power lines some distance from your home. Visit our generator safety page at www.pge.com/generator

* If your power goes out, unplug or turn off all electric appliances. Otherwise, when power is restored, several appliances may come back on at once and overload your circuits, or hot appliances may come on while you're away or asleep and pose a fire hazard. You may want to leave one light on to tell you when power is restored.